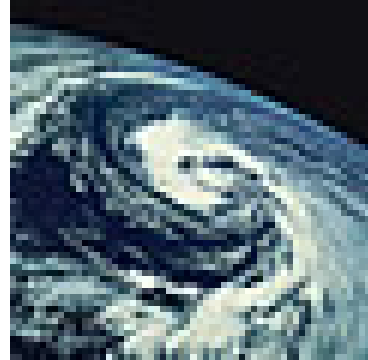


## KDHE, KDEM and Local Agencies Join Efforts on Hurricane Katrina Relief

During the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, the KDHE Emergency Operations Center (EOC) was activated and used for the first time. KDHE Bioterrorism staff also manned a station at the State Emergency Operations Center with KDEM at the State Defense Building for several days.

This combined effort proved to be an excellent test of the functionality of the new KDHE EOC. An after-event review was conducted to establish what went right and what needed improvement. Unlike a tabletop exercise that plays out in compressed time, the relief effort offered a chance to test the system in real time during an incident where there was no impending danger to Kansans.



A Hurricane Katrina Volunteer Line was established using the KDHE Public Information Hotline phone number, and an online volunteer form was placed on the KDHE Web site. Callers could volunteer over the Web or had the option of speaking with an operator during business hours. The Web-based form (<https://survey.kdhe.state.ks.us/katrina.htm>) was also used to enter information taken by the operators who manned the phones.

As of late September, 190 medical professionals used this system to volunteer their services. The database will be furnished to the appropriate officials, and the individuals who volunteered will be contacted if they are needed. The KDHE Web site still has the volunteer form available, and the greeting on the Volunteer Line directs callers to it or to leave a voicemail message.

Wichita, Topeka, Salina, Lawrence, Garden City and Johnson County all prepared for an influx of evacuees from the disaster area. Collaboration among agencies such as local health departments, local emergency management, American Red Cross, and the Salvation Army went well. While no facilities were used, it was an excellent real-time exercise that demonstrated the strengths and exposed the weaknesses of plans, facilities and equipment on both the local and state level.

Although evacuees were expected in several of the cities, only self-evacuees made it to Kansas. It was determined that 1,024 households, evacuated following Hurricane Katrina, have registered with FEMA as being in Kansas. The American Red Cross and the Kansas Division of Emergency Management are unaware of any related sheltering operations in Kansas. Very early on in the first week following the disaster event, some spontaneous shelters opened, a few managed by American Red Cross chapters, and a few sponsored by other organizations. According to the American Red Cross, their best information currently indicates that evacuated families are now either staying with family and friends or at hotels and motels in Kansas. There is also information that a few families have begun to set up households and to establish residence here.